

**STATEMENT OF SENATOR LINCOLN CHAFEE
ON THE DEATH OF HOPE HARRIS
May 14, 2004**

Mr. President, it is with great sadness that I speak about a true friend and colleague. For her 26-years, Hope Harris served the people of Rhode Island as a member of my staff, and prior to that, on the staff of my late father, Senator John H. Chafee. She was known to thousands of Rhode Islanders who have visited and telephoned their United States Senator as the sympathetic and trustworthy professional answering the phone and the door, at the front desk in their Senator's Providence office. She was without peer in her ability to convey, in a brief encounter that the mission of the Senator's state operation is to help people in any way possible. On May 12th, Hope died after a difficult struggle with cancer.

Hope's impact on my ability to represent the people of Rhode Island cannot be overstated. Her impact was felt by every anxious senior citizen who experienced a problem with Social Security; by every parent calling to plan a family trip to Washington; every young idealist determined to save the world; every beleaguered citizen who is convinced that the government is after them. When they called or visited my office seeking help, or an answer, or action, or reassurance, Hope was the first person they encountered in their quest. In the space between saying "Good morning, Senator Chafee's office," and hitting the "transfer" button, Hope put people at ease, instilled calm, became a friend.

People were not numbers to Hope, they were souls in search of a connection, one that maybe Hope could help them find. One of her greatest gifts was her ability to see the humanity of all people, regardless of social station, political power, religion, or race. In

that, she remains an example for us all. Thanks to Hope's extraordinary ability to convey that human connection, Rhode Islanders knew that Senator Chafee's office was a welcoming and responsive place.

Hope remained optimistic and of good cheer regardless of what was going on in her personal life. In 2001, she lost her husband. And she has faced, and lost, a daunting battle with cancer. Through it all, Hope demonstrated the highest level of dedication to a job she loved and believed in, never betraying to any individual constituent that they were anything but the center of her universe.

Hope was involved in many volunteer organizations throughout the course of her career. She was most recently active with the Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and the AIDS Project of Rhode Island. She cherished her involvement with the First Pentecostal Church and the Congdon Street Baptist Church.

In 2003, Hope celebrated her 25th year as a Senate employee. And just recently, on May 3, 2004, Hope was the proud recipient of the Federal Employee of the Year award in the Civilian Support Staff category by the Rhode Island Association of Federal Employees. This honor was richly deserved. All of the Chafee family and the myriad of people who have been touched by the life of Hope Harris will miss her joy for living. She was the heart and soul of our Providence office.

Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that my comments be placed in the appropriate place in the Record. I would also like to include in the Record a copy of an article that appeared in the Providence Journal on March 11, 2004 that speaks to the true essence of Hope Harris.